

Online Quizzes - Are they Worthwhile?

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This article is based on my oral presentation given at the Fifth Laurels International Conference on Education and Management in English Language Teaching in Sao Paulo, Brazil in July 1997. It is aimed at those who would like to have further information on the applicability of the [Self-Study Quizzes for ESL Students](#).

Objective of the Article

The possibility for education on the Web is amazing. In fact, the Web is becoming the most popular medium for the delivery of instructional materials. The ever growing interest of instructional designers on the Web is stimulating more and more the creation of quiz pages. The objective of this article is twofold. First, to show that the quizzes delivered over the Web are powerful and useful tools for language teaching and learning since they provide students with additional and supplemental language material in specific areas of language learning. Second, to demonstrate how a teacher can use the quizzes in the lab and in the classroom.

The Self-Study Quizzes for ESL Students

The Internet TESL Journal's Self-Study Quizzes for ESL Students are a collection of quizzes developed by ESL/EFL teachers around the world to enhance learning. The quizzes are designed to help students who want to study online or who are interested in doing extra class work. The quizzes also provide teachers with extra material to complement their classes. All the quizzes are grouped into categories to facilitate selection by the teacher or the student.

See an example from each category.

- [Grammar](#)
- [Idioms, Phrasal Verbs & Slangs](#)
- [Vocabulary](#)
- [Readings](#)
- [Writing](#)
- [Scrambled Words](#)
- [Spelling](#)
- [Trivia, Culture & Sports](#)
- [Holidays](#)

Note: Refer to "[Self-Study Quizzes for ESL Students](#)" [Index Page](#) to see more quizzes under each heading.

Considering that variation is important in increasing students' motivation, different **types of quizzes** are presented. The types of quizzes are:

- [Fill in the Blanks](#)
- [Multiple Choice](#)
- [True or False](#)
- [Multiple Choice with Radio Button](#)
- [Multiple Choice with Radio Button and Notes](#)
- [Match the Columns](#)
- [Alternatives Hidden Under the Hint Button](#)
- [Cloze](#)
- [Table-Verbs](#)

- [Word Order](#)

Some quizzes are easy and some are more difficult. Quizzes with a hint button are fun and offer students a sense of accomplishment if they don't have to look at any hints. Multiple choice quizzes are offered with or without a radio button. The former type allows the student to check a single selection of pre-defined alternatives. Fill in the blanks, match the columns, tables, true or false and word order type of quizzes are harder since they require the students to process the information, get to conclusions and then compare their version to the answers given.

To guide teachers and students in their selection of quizzes, the quizzes are now in the process of being [sorted](#) according to levels of difficulty. The three levels are easy, medium and difficult.

Strengths and Limitations

Among the advantages in using the Self-Study Quizzes for ESL Students, the main one is related to the format of the quizzes. Whereas a great number of quizzes found on the Web are CGI format quizzes, the Self-Study Quizzes for ESL Students have small filesize and use only HTML codes, which speeds up the downloadable process.

Other advantages of the Self-Study Quizzes for ESL Students over CGI format quizzes are:

- The students and the teacher can work with the quizzes off-line or print them out. This is possible because the quizzes use HTML codes, so the quizzes with the answers are run by the web browser itself; there's no need to rely on re-connection with the main server.
- The students can get prompt feedback on their performance checking their answers against the correct ones which are displayed under the answer button. They don't need to submit their answers and wait for the web server machine to return the results, which may take some time.

In dealing with limitations, we have to consider both the general limitations of online quizzes and the specific limitations of the Self-Study Quizzes for ESL Students.

As general limitations we have:

- The necessity of having an Internet account to be able to access the information.
- The problems of the Internet itself, that is, the connection is sometimes slow or down.

As specific limitations of the Self-Study Quizzes for ESL Students we have to mention two things:

- The students have to keep their own score as they check their right and wrong answers against the correct answers given.
- The students are not given the time spent on each quiz, which would allow them to better judge their performance.

Ways a Teacher Can Use the Self-Study Quizzes for ESL Students in the Lab and in the Classroom.

It can't be denied that the use of technology for language teaching and learning is much more effective, motivating and challenging than the use of the traditional classroom tools: pen, paper and chalkboard.

To make the learning process more interactive, I suggest that:

- The teacher refer the students to the URL of the [Self-study Quizzes for ESL Students](#) and indicate the quizzes to be used in that lab session.
- The teacher lets the students select the quizzes they want to use. By doing this, the teacher helps to make the students more autonomous and, therefore, more conscious of their needs and less dependent on the teacher.

In case the school has a computer lab, but the students have no access to the Internet, the teacher can still simulate an online connection. To do this, the teacher has to use the school computer system or home system and his individual Internet account to access the quiz page, select the quizzes and save them to his disk. The teacher can either edit the quizzes to suit the students' levels

and needs or just put them on the computers and open them up on a browser. Then the teacher can ask the students to complete the self-assessment exercises.

Since the quizzes are a good medium to teach and learn English, they can easily be adapted for classroom use too. The teacher has only to download the quizzes, edit them or not, print them out and give them to the students as handouts.

Conclusions

Taking into account everything presented in this article, one can conclude that there are more pros than cons to the use of quizzes. Undoubtedly further studies on online quizzes must be carried out to come to any conclusion on their effectiveness in the learning process, but judging by the feedback I have received from colleagues and from students around the world, I can affirm that quizzes, especially when used interactively, can be of great value to motivate students in the study of a foreign language.

Note

For information on how to contribute to the Self-Study Quizzes for ESL Students, refer to the [How to Write a Self-Study Quiz](#) page.

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